

Faith and Inspiration

A Living Will

As a Christian, I feel that it is part of my calling to honor God with my actions, to look for his will and enact it. Unfortunately, "looking for his will" is much easier to say than it is to do.

Consider that we decide to look in the Bible for clues on what decisions seem to honor God. If we find the prophetess Anna, perhaps we'll be led to think that God's will is to stay in the church building or the ministry mindset twenty-four hours a day, constantly and without respite no matter the personal cost (Luke 2:36-37).

If we find Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-nego, we may believe that God is calling us to stand up for our even in the face of opposition, to march through a fiery furnace rather than bow before a false god (Daniel 3:14-27). God protected them from the consequence of death; perhaps he will protect us too.

But those aren't the only actions we see God acknowledge. What if we find Naaman asking for permission to bow in the temple to Rimmon when his king puts a hand on his shoulder? Rather than order the man to stand strong against this blasphemy or to give up a position that requires such prostration, God's prophet Elisha seems to see it as almost trivial, merely telling Naaman to "Go in peace" (2 Kings 5:19 NIV).

Or perhaps like Elijah we'll need to flee from persecution, our confrontations with kings on hold for a moment, hiding by a river and

fed by ravens until God gives us the all-clear to raise our heads and be seen again (1 Kings 17:1-6).

There are so many possibilities, so many actions with which God will work. Nevertheless, this statement is not meant to make God's will seem completely unknowable.

It's not an argument to say that any action can be "God's will" as long as we rationalize it enough. Rather, it's an attempt to help us slow down and think about our actions.

Too often I catch myself looking for a universal solution, a dichotomous "If X happens, take Y action" that applies equally and

there isn't always one correct choice. What in one instance is laziness in another is rest. What sometimes is cowardice in another is patience.

Sometimes God calls for fasting, for out-loud prayers that last hours, or for someone to stand up for what they believe in even as everything around them says to bow down. Other times, fasting becomes fainting, those prayers meet a raw throat, and God gives permission to kneel in the temple to Rimmon. When we are tired of serving, when the worship becomes listless, and when we feel that we can do nothing but bend beneath the weight breaking our weary bones, I want us to take a moment to think, to do our best to discern God's will. When we are in the thrill of watching God move in our lives, when joy becomes ecstasy, and when we feel that the mountaintops are miles beneath our feet, I want us to pause and consider the next action.

A given response or solution is not always the correct, best, or most God-honoring solution. Sometimes we need a slap, or a chat, or a call to persevere and endure. Other times we need to stay the course, secure in the victory we feel around us. Still other times we need to stay our shaking hands, hide by the river, or toss off the burdens that we cannot bear a moment longer. Sometimes what we've done is enough and it's time to take a break.

Discerning God's will isn't simple. Making any of these decisions should not be flippant. But my hope is that we will examine all the options before us rather than assume some are automatically always correct or incorrect. It is better to remember that we have a living relationship with our creator, and with each other, rather than a set of formulaic rules.



Luke Marshburn
Homestead Mennonite Church



at all times to similar situations.

"If someone persecutes me for my faith, I must stand strong in spite of repercussions." Or, "If my job requires me to keep my Christianity on the subtle side, I may bow to the rule without compromising God's call for me."

In spite of this tendency to seek a simple, universal decision, I think it's far more likely that circumstances can create a wide variety of God-honoring solutions that look starkly different from each other. God's will is not monolithic, and

Child Tax Credit enrollment deadline is November 15th

Miami-Dade County

The deadline to apply for the Advanced Child Tax Credit is Tuesday, November 15th.

Part of the American Rescue Plan, the benefit is situated to help individuals raising children. As the deadline looms, Miami-Dade County is working across departments to spread the word to all eligible members of the community and assist families with enrollment.

"This program has helped reduce childhood poverty across the country, and we want more families to continue benefitting from it, so we don't leave any child behind!" said Miami-Dade Mayor Daniella Levine Cava. "The 2022 Child Tax Credit can be a lifeline for so many families still struggling to recover from the pandemic. It will help them buy groceries, pay rent, or catch up on any pending bills. A little help can go a long way to ensure that our children's basic needs are met. As part of our 'No Wrong Door' initiative, we are committed to making sure all eligible families know about and can apply for this critical benefit."

The Child Tax Credit benefits for those eligible are \$3,000 per child, between 6-17 years of age (\$250 each month) and \$3,600 per child under 6 years of age (\$300 each month).

Eligible families will receive full credit up to \$150,000 for two-parent households and up to \$112,500 for single parent heads of household.

Nearly all families with children qualify, including those who have earned enough money to file taxes and those not



required to file a traditional tax return. Some income limitations apply.

"We are excited and hopeful that Miami-Dade County parents will apply and that all eligible families will receive the benefit of the Child Tax Credit," said Sonia Grice, Director of Miami-Dade County Community Action and Human Services.

"It's been extremely helpful. It puts food in the fridge, we didn't have before," said Yanatha, a father of four.

"I use it to help pay for aftercare services," said Lula, a mother of two.

Parents are encouraged to sign up and access monthly benefits:

- Online at <http://www.GetCTC.org/> Miami
- Call (786) 469-4640
- Visit any of the CAHSD Community Resource Centers in South Dade:
 - Perrine 17801 Homestead Ave. Miami, FL 33157 (305) 254-5804

Naranja 13955 SW 264th St. Miami, FL 33032 (305) 258-5471

Florida City 1600 NW 6 Court Florida City, FL 33034 (305) 247-2068

Know the Answers to your SS Questions



Securing today and tomorrow

Question: I receive SSI benefits may I apply for the ACP Program.
C. Poviones, Hialeah Gardens,

Answer: It is called the Affordable Connectivity Program that provides discount of up to \$30.00 per month toward internet service for eligible households.

Any household with an individual who receives Supplemental Security Income is eligible to receive discounted internet service through ACP. The telephone number 877 384 2575.

Question: Must I pay Social Security taxes on my earnings after full retirement age?
M. Delgado, Pembroke Pines

Answer: Everyone working in covered employment or self-employment regardless of age or eligibility for benefits must pay Social Security taxes.



However, there are narrow exceptions to paying Social Security taxes that apply at any age, such as an individual who qualifies for a religious exemption.

When you're ready to apply for retirement benefits, use our online retirement application, the quickest, easiest, and most convenient way to apply.

Question: What is the maximum Social Security retirement benefit payable?
E. Padronis, Ft. Lauderdale

Answer: The maximum benefit depends on the age you retire. For example, if you retire at full

retirement age in 2022, your maximum benefit would be \$3,345. However, if you retire at age 62 in 2022, your maximum benefit would be \$2,364. If you retire at age 70 in 2022, your maximum benefit would be \$4,194.

When you're ready to apply for retirement benefits, use our online retirement application, the quickest, easiest, and most convenient way to apply.

Question: What happens if I work and get Social Security retirement benefits?
H. Bell, Margate

Answer: You can get Social Security retirement benefits and work at the same time. However, if you are younger than full retirement age and make more than the yearly earnings limit, we will reduce your benefit. Starting with the month you reach full retirement age, we will not reduce your benefits no matter how much you earn.

We use the following earnings limits to reduce your benefits: If you are under full retirement age

for the entire year, we deduct \$1 from your benefit payments for every \$2 you earn above the annual limit. For 2021 that limit is \$19,560.00

In the year you reach full retirement age, we deduct \$1 in benefits for every \$3 you earn above a different limit, but we only count earnings before the month you reach your full retirement age. If you will reach full retirement age in 2021, the limit on your earnings for the months before full retirement age is \$51,960. Starting with the month you reach full retirement age, you can get your benefits with no limit on your earnings.

Question: What counts as earning?
V. Mendoza, Kendall

Answer: When we figure out how much to deduct from your benefits, we count only the wages you make from your job or your net earnings if you're self-employed. We include bonuses, commissions, and vacation pay. We don't count pensions, annuities, investment income, interest, veterans, or other government or military retirement benefits.

2023's Best Colleges in Florida

With the first "early decision" college-application deadline looming on Nov. 1, and tuition and room and board at a four-year costing around \$23,000 - \$52,000 per year, WalletHub has released its 2023's Best College & University Rankings report in addition to separate rankings for colleges and for universities.

- Top 10 Colleges & Universities in Florida**
1. University of Florida
 2. Florida State University
 3. Florida Polytechnic University
 4. University of Miami
 5. University of South Florida
 6. University of Central Florida
 7. Florida A&M University
 8. Florida Inter.University

9. Florida Southern College
 10. Ave Maria University
- (1 = Best; 13 = Average; 25 = Worst):

- University of Florida**
- 2nd – Admission Rate
 - 5th – Net Cost
 - 9th – Student-Faculty Ratio
 - 3rd – On-Campus Crime
 - 7th – Gender & Racial

- Diversity**
- 1st – Graduation Rate
 - 3rd – Post-Attendance Median Salary

- Florida State University**
- 5th – Admission Rate
 - 13th – Net Cost
 - 18th – Student-Faculty Ratio
 - 19th – On-Campus Crime
 - 11th – Gender & Racial Diversity
 - 3rd – Graduation Rate

- 7th – Post-Attendance Median Salary

- Florida Polytechnic University**
- 11th – Admission Rate
 - 1st – Net Cost
 - 11th – Student-Faculty Ratio
 - 11th – On-Campus Crime
 - 23rd – Gender & Racial Diversity
 - 16th – Graduation Rate



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